

Accession Number: A/8

Classification:

Date: 14 May 1974 11:00-12:00 p.m.

Place: Evanston 2034 Darrow

Interview with: Mr. Clarence Tilford

Interview by: S.F. Patton

Observations: Mr. Tilford had a poor memory, no doubt due to his age: 87. Interview held in private home. He was quite receptive for the interview. Although I soon discovered he arrived in Evanston ca. 1950's. Consequently interview was brief. He is nearly blind and hard of hearing as well

1 Q. What is your birthdate

A. Thursday. 9 May 1885

2 Q. Were you born in Evanston

A. No, Centralia, Missouri

3 Q. When did you arrive in Evanston

A. 1958

4 Q. Did you like Evanston when you first arrived

A. No. I did not know nobody except a few people

5 Q. Who did you know when you arrived

A. My son. I passed through here several times. We'd stop. My son wasn't travelling with me. It was three of us, schoolmates. One attended Ames Agricultural Schl. The other fella and I scuffled around.

There was Eastman School in New York. Negroes had a tough time then. Old man "Dad Smiley" taught photography and he took a liking to me. We sold photos for 25¢ a piece; we worked with a Kodak. Dad Smiley got me in the school. The only way we got in was with a job, and we became friends with all the head teachers. We would ask about this and that. I got acquainted with the Dean; I kept fussing around. I had a little psychology in school; so I used psychology on him. I would help him with his coat, etc.





6 Q. When was this

A. I don't know

7 Q. Were you twenty years old then

A. Not quite that old

8 Q. Continue, what happened at Eastman

A. Well, he like me, the other teachers liked me. I would ask questions; then I jotted down on cards what I wanted to know. I would run errands for them. I made friends with everybody! If they said ugly things back to you, ignore it. That person will do a lot of thinking about what you didn't say. You understand what I'm saying

9 Q. Yes. I do. What were you doing when you passed through Evanston

A. I worked for Worldwide Photography Co. then. The headmen of Eastman School got me the job. There were only two Negroes working for Worldwide then. Then the job broke later

10 Q. How did that happen

A. I don't know. They introduced photography in journalism. They would get the photos before we could. You see, it would be four or five days before we got the photos to the press

11 Q. Oh you traveled through the country

A. Yes. We took scenery pictures of the U.S.A. Then after I married,...I had the sweetest wife

12 Q. The company went out of business

A.. No. The company didn't go out of business. No, we went out of business.

I remembered when I met my wife. I was with my sister, she is four years younger than I, and she introduced me to Molly Grant. That was down in Missouri

13 Q. Were you working for Worldwide when you arrived in Evanston

A. I was working as a file clerk in Kansas City, Missouri for the Internal Revenue Service





14 Q. You were in Kansas City, Missouri before coming to Evanston

A. Yes, just afterwards my wife passed. That is when I discovered my mistake---I worshipped my wife instead of God

15 Q. Your son asked you to come to Evanston

A. No. I had an emergency operation. I couldn't take care of myself. So my son had me come here to live with him. Before that though I enjoyed myself, at least I called myself enjoying myself

16 Q. Were you able to work when you arrived in Evanston

A. No I stayed at McCarthy's for two weeks in Kansas City. Then I came here. I was office boy at American Photocopy Place. They couldn't put me on the payroll because of my social security. I would get 50¢ an errand

I about five years ago I quit smoking

I was the third man to join Senior Citizens at Foster Community Center. In 1971 I was Senior Citizen of the year

Mr Holt, he is dead now, and I used to ride around town in an old Chevey. We were just having fun. Yes, I have good memories of my life

17 Q. What kind of errands did you do

A. Oh, I would shine shoes. I would go to the Post Office

18 Q. Were there any other Negroes working there

A. There was a porter and a store-room boy.

Clayton Rockborn, Mr. Rockborn's son. Mr. Rockborn owned the photocopy company, Clayton owned the chemical company. The Clayton Chemical Co. is right next door. He's his oldest son. When Christmas time came, I went to Columbus, Ohio to visit my sister. The people gave money in envelopes.

I had eight children. Five boys in a row and three girls. I lost my oldest and youngest son. The oldest son passed. My youngest son was shot, he was ambushed. The man thought he was someone else

19 Q. Was this in Missouri

A. Kansas City. The boy got ten years for it. I'd figured turn him loose and let God take care of him. His conscious would do the punishing.

There are two kinds of thought---spiritual thought or evil thought





20 Q. What kind of job when you arrived did you friends have

A. My son is a glazer and carpenter. He puts glass in cars; he works for a glass company of Chicago. His name is James Edward Tifford: he lives on Hartrey

21 Q. What kind of work did people of your age do

A. Mr. Holt was retired. Williams has a shoe shop next to the barber shop. I didn't have any elderly friends. Mr. Etheridge is retired too.

22 Q. Did they ever tell you the kind of work they did before they retired

A. Mr Holt was a janitor at the Post Office. Mr Etheridge I don't know what he did

23 Q. How many brothers and sisters did you have

A. Thirteen children in the family, I was the seventh son. I was married for thirty years. I was thirty and she was twenty-nine.

